



Story

of the

Standard
Bearers

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WOMAN'S FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY
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Story of the Standard Bearers

A Plan Needed When the Epworth League came sweeping through our churches, we hailed it with delight, as an all-round organization, thanked God, and rejoiced in its glorious march, but we gradually awoke to the fact that it was engrossing the young women of our Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, and that the "Missionary Spoke" did not materialize as we had hoped.

Our young women said, "We cannot belong to so many societies," and we did not wish them to desert the League. The situation was perplexing. Veterans were falling, young recruits growing less. Anxious and alarmed, with a feeling that something must be done, application was made to many bright women for a plan, or even a name, that would appeal to young people, but all in vain.

A Plan Given Just then an article in the *Union Signal* mentioned the Church Pennant that flies above the Stars and Stripes in our navy during Divine worship. Like a flash came the thought, "There is the emblem," and as quickly as the voice of thunder follows the flash of light came the name "Standard Bearer," and a plan to enlist one thousand young people, in the New England Branch, who should each give five cents per month towards the support of a missionary.

It was not realized at the time, but today, with humble gratitude, I reverently acknowledge that the Lord spoke to His handmaid that day.

Olympia I sought out Rev. D. H. Tribou, D.D.,
Pennant a Methodist Chaplain in the United States Navy, to ascertain if such a flag really existed. He assured me that it was a regular signal pennant in common use throughout the navy, that it would be an appropriate emblem, and that it might be possible to find an old one in a lot of bunting worn out in service and of no further use to the government. Not long after I received a regular naval church pennant from the equipment of the U. S. S. Olympia, which had recently returned from Manilla.

When that old discarded flag, worn and weather-stained with long service, was actually in hand, how reverently it was unrolled ! As the blue cross on the white pennant lay before me, my soul was strangely thrilled. This very cross had floated from the flagship of the fleet that had torn down the flag which for long centuries had meant tyranny and oppression to those far-away islands. With the thought of what it meant to millions of little brown sisters came a new inspiration, and glad vows were made by His grace, who bore the cross for all, to work earnestly to induce young people to join a grand army whose one aim should be to hasten the "Golden Age" when above the flag of every nation shall float the Cross of Christ, in token that "God is now worshipped here."

Badge and Flower Meanwhile a jeweler was found who gave us our beautiful badge, the little flag, bearing on its white bosom the blue cross. This has been of untold use in our work. It is a constant reminder to those who wear it, and it has done much to popularize our army — a silent but eloquent helper.

Fearing that someone might possibly dispute

our right to the emblem, a letter was written to the Secretary of the Navy, and the following courteous reply was received, bearing the seal of the "Department of the Navy."

Washington, D. C., July 29, 1901.

My dear Miss Cushman : —

The Secretary is in receipt of your interesting note, and the badge, which is very pretty, and made after our church pennant ; but I am to say that no permission is needed to use this badge, as such an article could not be used by us, and consequently can be treated as an original possession of your own.

Very sincerely,

W. S. Cowles, Commander U. S. N.,

Acting Chief, Bureau of Navigation

The carnation has since been chosen as the flower of the army. Both the badge and the flower are also adopted by all the young people's organizations of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society.

New England Adopts Plan

In October, 1900, while the plan was still in embryo, a flying trip was made to Worcester, to the General Executive Committee then in session, and five minutes were allowed in which to present the plan. I took the next train home, feeling that time and money had been thrown away, but not quite ready to throw away the plan. Fortunately it found a loyal champion in Mrs. C. S. Nutter, the devoted Secretary of Young Woman's Work in the New England Branch. She presented the plan at the November meeting of our Executive Board, it was adopted and money voted for necessary helps.

With the privilege of trying the plan in my own Branch, I was quite satisfied. With what I esteemed a great stretch of faith, I earnestly insisted that in all New England, we could by serious effort enlist one regiment of one thousand, who would give five cents a month towards the support of a missionary. Miss Effie G. Young, of Peking, China, was assigned as first Standard Bearer Missionary.

Dues for Missionaries

From the beginning the theory has been that all Standard Bearer dues should go towards the support of some missionary, so that a Standard Bearer shall always be one who is helping to care for some missionary. At this point lies much of the secret of the success of the movement. It is the thought of having a missionary of their own, knowing about her and her work, hearing from her, loving her, working and giving for her, being one of a thousand to support her, and feeling that she is dependent upon them, that induced many to enlist, and holds them loyal to the army.

First Organization

One day it came, what I had been waiting for, — an invitation from my dear friend, Mrs. J. N. Hanaford, to organize a company of Standard Bearers. I rejoiced but with trembling, for it was to be a testing time. Would the young people take to it? Would they join? Would they organize? Who could tell.

In spite of gloomy weather and slippery walks, a goodly number reached the church, and we succeeded in organizing the first company of Standard Bearers, January 24th., 1901, at Southbridge Mass., with fourteen members. These were so faithfully mothered that the membership was increased to eighty during the year.

**Conference
Missionary**

Other invitations followed, and we soon found that one thousand could easily be enlisted in one conference, so Miss Young was assigned to her own conference, and Other missionaries assigned to the other conferences in New England, seven in all. After watching carefully the growth of the army, I would most earnestly urge, that wherever possible, a missionary be assigned to each conference.

**The Plan
Spreads**

Meanwhile the Northwestern Branch took up the plan with enthusiasm, and workers in other Branches began to write for information in regard to the Standard Bearer plan, and for leaflets and helps and badges. At my own risk, thousands of leaflets, manuals and cards were printed, but it was impossible to issue helps as fast as they were called for, as I could not foresee what was needed. There was no authority behind me, or precedent before me. It was a new road, with no footprints. Is it to be wondered at that I often knew not which way to turn, and sometimes went too fast and sometimes too slowly? That I sometimes disappointed the dear workers, who wanted just the right thing at the right time?

**Organize
if Possible**

Realizing that organization means perpetuation, in any cause, the plan has always been, "Organize if possible, but if it is utterly impossible, go ahead and enlist, appoint a secretary and treasurer, keep sweet, and quietly work towards organization." Many of our best companies were at first formed of contributing members, who said, "Oh yes I'll gladly pay the dues each month, but I don't want to be in any society," but the interest has grown, till they have requested to be organized. This has nearly always

followed where someone with the "mother-love" in her heart has mothered the contributing company. Where the company has died out, it has been for lack of care. The responsibility is with the auxiliary, rather than with the company.

The Plan Endorsed Naturally one plan could not please everybody, and there was some opposition, in a kindly way, and how the plan has gradually been adopted by Branch after Branch, would be too long a story. It has now been endorsed by the General Executive Committee of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, and all general helps are now issued by the publishing office of the society, and may be had at all Depots of Supplies, many of them being free to workers. Each local Branch issues the leaflets about its own Standard Bearer missionaries, also Manuals, Constitutions, Pledge Cards and Plans and Instructions can be obtained at Branch Depots of Supplies.

Our Life Members Fifteen dollars now constitutes life membership.

The Army Advances We can now say, we have waged our "peaceful warfare," in love and loyalty, till the shouts of victory resound from the long line of encampments, reaching from the eastern shores of our land to the shores where the sun sets.

Through the Golden Gate, we catch echoes, from the companies in India and China, while from the other side of the Atlantic, come the hearty greetings of our German and Italian comrades.

The General reports show that in 1889 our Young People numbered 14,156. In 1900 they numbered 15,090, while in 1902, before our Standard Bearer army was two years old, they had leaped to 39,674. (For present figures see latest report).

The Army at Work The Standard Bearers have sent out many new workers, and have over fifty missionaries assigned them for support.

Warm hearts, fertile brains, skilful fingers, are producing bright programs, profitable entertainments, and dainty articles for sales, thus bringing many extra dollars to the treasurer, and packing mission boxes with helpful gifts. The spirit of loyalty and devotion to the cause and to each other, is deepening and spreading, and best of all, our great army is coming into closer comradeship with our Great Commander, and into more sympathetic fellowship with all for whom he died.

Faithful Leaders We now have faithful, efficient superintendents, who are planning and pushing the campaign, and calling to the splendid hosts of young Methodism.

“One and all, to His standard rally,
Think of the millions that must be won, —
Bring in recruits from each plain and valley
One by one, one by one.”

Loud and clear rings out the war cry : “Add One,
Double the Army.”

Glorious Prospect May our Father give us, in each church, just one earnest, loving, consecrated heart, to “mother” the Standard Bearers; then shall we soon hear the triumphant “tramp, tramp, tramp,” of a Royal Army, one hundred thousand strong.

“Hear the tread of youthful feet,
See a host victorious,
Marching forth our King to greet,
Neath His banner glorious,
Lift His royal standard high,
Tell the world the story,
Let our song and watchword be
Christ, the King of glory.”